IN THE SPECIFICATION:

The paragraph beginning at line 19 of page 26 has been amended as follows:

Figure 10 illustrates a front elevational view of one designed embodiment of a servo tower [300] 301, similar to that shown in Figures 2-5, and shows the suture path therethrough. Suture 55 is pulled off one end of a supply roll 302 mounted to one side of the servo tower, through the center of an annular guide disc 304, and into a mechanical tensioner [306] 309. The mechanical tensioner can comprise a stationary guide frame 308 and a pivotally mounted guide frame [310] 311, pivotally mounted about a pin 312 at the lower end of the stationary guide frame. Each of the stationary guide frame and the pivotally mounted guide frame has a series of spaced guide elements, each with a central guide aperture therein, which are alternately interleaved, such that the spaced guide elements of the pivotally mounted guide frame alternate with the spaced guide elements of the stationary guide frame. The pivotally mounted guide frame [310] 311 is spring biased about the mounting pin 312 to rotate the top thereof away from the top of the stationary guide frame, such that the suture extending between the alternating stationary guide frame elements and the pivoted guide frame elements is placed under tension while being pulled therethrough.

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The paragraph beginning at line 27 of page 27 has been amended as follows:

The suture then extends to an out-of-suture sensor positioned at 317, and then through a pair of opposed rollers 318, 320 of a knot detector. One of the pair of rollers is 318 mounted on one end of a lever arm 322, and if a knot travels between the

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pair of opposed rollers, it pushes the lever arm away, and the movement of the lever arm is detected by a photodetector 324. The suture 55 then travels around an idler roller [326] 320 to change direction, to a further idler roller 328 to change direction again, from which the suture 55 extends vertically downwardly through a heated tipping assembly 330, which heats and ultimately stiffens a small length of the suture, at which the suture is subsequently cut and the cut tip is inserted into and swaged to a needle. The suture 55 then extends downwardly from the tipping assembly to a large idler roller 332 mounted near the bottom of the machine having an appropriately 7 inch diameter, at which the suture reverses direction and travels vertically upwardly to the first and second gripper assemblies 30, 32, only one of which is visible in Figure 10, the suture cutter assembly 334 and a suture swaging station 336.

The paragraph beginning at line 1 of page 31 has been amended as follows:

As described above, after heating of a predetermined length of suture at the tipping assembly, the suture must cool to allow setting and hardening of the suture material prior to cutting of the suture at the hardened length and insertion of the cut stiffened end into a needle. This cooling of the suture is provided in this embodiment by allowing a discrete number of machine cutting cycles to occur between tipping of the suture and cutting of the suture. This is provided by allowing a predetermined long length of suture travel between the tipping assembly and the cutter assembly. Hence, the suture tipping assembly 330 is positioned near the top of the servo tower, and after heating thereat, the suture travels to the bottom of the machine, around the large idler roller 332 thereat, and then back upwardly to the cutter assembly 334. The large diameter

of the idler roller 332, relative to the other idler rollers [326] 320, 328, is provided because the small length of suture which has been heated at the tipping assembly 330, has begun to harden and set by the time the heated section reaches the large idler roller. The large diameter thereof facilitates the suture to travel therearound without picking up a permanent curved set from the large idler roller, as it is desirable for the suture to be straight, without any curve, when it is subsequently cut and inserted into a needle. The idler rollers [326] 320 and 328 typically have a 0.5 inch diameter, whereas the large diameter roller 332 has a diameter preferably greater than 6.0 inches, approximately 7.0 inches in one embodiment.